

Ex-Fireman, 91, Recalls Provo Department Near Turn of Century

R. Dean Strong, Teamster For 20 Years, Brings Back Days of Horse-Drawn Engines

By IRENE JONES

"Out of these men here in this picture, I'm the only one left. There were over 30 members of the Provo Volunteer Fire Department at that time, and out of all of them, I'm the only one still alive."

R. Dean Strong, 543 E. 6th S., Provo, is one of the last remaining testimonies of the Provo Volunteer Fire Department, of which he was a member for at least 20 years. The 91-year-"young" man, who can still recall many exciting and factual experiences connected with the department, identified without hesitation each member of the volunteers appearing in the accompanying historic picture. He even remembered the horses' names.

Early Days

Back in the early days of the Provo Fire Department, about 1904, there were two full-time firemen. Joseph Loveless, father of J. Max Loveless of Provo, served as fire chief from 1903 to 1920, except for a brief interval of less than a year in 1908. Rasmus Dean Strong, generally known as "Uncle Dean," was teamster for the department for about six years. He was employed by the department as a full-time employee and volunteer from about 1900 to 1920. After this time Provo City organized a full-time paid fire department with a chief and four regular

the old Provo Fire Station, which has long since been torn down, and the many fires which he helped to extinguish. He stated, "The old station was about five rods east of the old post office (now the City Hall) and was near where the City and County Building now stands. It faced north, and the city jail was behind it."

The building was located on Center Street on the City and County Block, across the street from where the Paramount Theatre stands today. It housed stalls for horses, quarters for the regular employees, and a huge tower with a large bell used to summon the volunteers to fires.

Mr. Strong remembers many times pulling the two ropes attached to the bell to bring the firemen.

1892 to 1923

The station was built in 1892 and was used until 1923, when it was abandoned and torn down because of the lack of space for the new motor driven fire vehicles which replaced the horse-drawn wagons. The old bell which had been used to ring the fire alarm can now be seen in the Pioneer Village Museum in North Park.

The fire he remembers most happened in 1918, and involved the Knight Woolen Mills on July 30 of that year. He said that, because of insufficient water, the firemen had to use water

returned after a short time and again began working in that position.

According to Max Loveless, Mr. Strong was an excellent teamster and "just had a way with horses. Those horses had confidence in him and he possessed an art of driving that probably no one will ever master again."

Mr. Strong recalls how he would drive the team as fast as the horses could run with the men hanging on, sometimes in the black of night when he could barely see the road.

Volunteers Listed

Men were serving as volunteers during the time that Mr. Strong worked for the department as a teamster included the following with the approximate time of service: Joseph Loveless, who served as fire chief for 18 years; Robert Boardman, assistant fire chief and volunteer for about 21 years; Warren S. Ferre, volunteer for seven years; John H. Durrant, 19 years; Arthur Durrant, brother of John, 11 years; Roy Boren, four years; W. E. (Will) Harding, three years; Carl Christensen, eight years; David Loveless, a former fire chief, 21 years; Ernest (Ern) Martin, 11 years; Parley Peay, nine years; Miles Davis, eight years; Will F. Olson, 16 years; Edwin Johnson, 15 years; Frank Roper, 17 years; Percy Jones, six years; Joe Stubbs, 11 years;



POSING IN FRONT of the old Provo Fire Station in 1908-09, are 21 members of the Provo Volunteer Department. The station was located on Center Street on the City and County Block facing north. The volunteers were from left, standing, Warren S. Ferre, John H. Durrant, Roy Boren, W. E. (Will) Harding, Carl Christensen, David Loveless, Ernest (Ern) Martin, Parley Peay, Miles Davis, Will F. Olson, Edwin Johnson,

S. F. (Frank) Roper, Percy Jones, and Joe Stubbs. In the buggy is Fire Chief Joseph W. Loveless on the left, and Robert Boardman, assistant chief. On the hose wagon in center are R. Dean Strong, still living today, left, Leo H. Bean and James Markham. Seated on the fire engine are Don Parks, driving, and William Strong. R. Dean Strong is the only living members of the group.

Mr. Lovelless received \$50 a day so we could fight that fire." But before we could get any water out of the Mill Race we had to fetch the watermaster to cut off all irrigation for the day so we could fight that fire."